

# The Port of Dundee

## Dundee City Archives - Research Guide 11

### Background

The history of Dundee is closely linked to that of the Harbour and Port. The harbour is thought to have existed since the 11th century. The limits of the harbour were first officially defined in the Charter of 1641. It was run by the Town Council until 1815, when it was transferred to a Commission. Five years later in 1820 operations were passed to the Trustees. The port really started to grow in the early 19th Century. Improvement works, designed by Thomas Telford began in 1815. The King William IV Dock was opened in 1825 and the Earl Grey Dock followed in 1834. By this time, the port was taking in over one million bales of jute each year. The Camperdown Dock was opened in 1865 and the Victoria Dock and East graving Dock was opened in 1875. By the 1890s ships were becoming too large to fit into the walled docks, so the Eastern Wharf was built. In the 1900s the wharf became the first reinforced concrete dock in Scotland. Extensions after WW1 included electric cranes. Railways had been at the docks since the 1830s and by 1933 there were 14 miles of track.

Under an Order of 1933 the Harbour Trustees were due to fill in the now little used King William IV dock. This only partially done in the 1940s. This, the Earl Grey Dock and the Tidal Basin were all filled in during the construction of the Tay Road Bridge in the 1960s. By this time the work of the Port had almost exclusively shifted to the wharfs at the eastern end of the docks. The Trustees continued to control the harbour until 1975, when they were replaced by the Dundee Port Authority. In 1995 the Port Authority went private being known as the Port of Dundee Ltd. At this time it was acquired by Forth Ports.

### What Records are there?

#### The Dundee Harbour Trust

Dundee City Archives holds the records of the Dundee Harbour Trust (Ref: GD/DH). This includes:

Minutes	1824-1992
Accounts	1872-1988

The collection also includes plans, elevations, maps, drawings, letter books and a series of clerk's papers on a variety of topics.

#### Records relating to Ships

Within the Harbour Trust, we also have arrival and departure books (GD/DH/18), and Harbour Master log books (GD/DH/19). These include:

	Arrival & Departure	Log Books
Camperdown Dock	1926-1969	1938-1968
Earl Grey Dock	1922-1963	1936-1963
Eastern Wharf	1920-1965	1936-1965

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## What Records are there? (continued)

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	Arrival & Departure	Log Books
Fish Dock	1926-1949	-
King George Wharf	1916-1957	1936-1969
King William IV Dock	1925-1957	-
Queen Elizabeth Wharf	1940-1961	-
Tide Harbour	1924-1963	-
Western Wharf	1929-1939	-

### Customs Records (Ref: [CE70](#))

Dundee City Archives also hold records of the Dundee Outport.

Letter Books	1708-1960
Collectors Reports	1915-1952
Register of Ages and Capacities	1833-1872
Royal Naval Reserve Enrolment Book	1889-1944
Salary Book	1918-1926
Register of Ships	1824-1931 (indexed by ship name)
Register of Sea Fishing Boats	1869-1988

We also hold similar records for the Montrose Outport ([CE53](#)) and the Arbroath Outport ([CE80](#)). All three of these collections are listed in full on the [National Records of Scotland's Online Catalogue](#).

### Records of Shipping companies

Dundee City Archives holds the records of the Dundee, Perth and London (DP&L) Shipping Company (Ref: GD/DPL). This includes minute books, financial records, and an index of ships from c. 1921. The collection also includes the records of the Aberdeen, Newcastle and Hull Steam Co and other predecessor companies.

We also hold other smaller collections relating to shipping companies, sailors, businesses based in the port and much more. If you are looking for something in particular or would like to know more, please contact us for further information.

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## Records held elsewhere...

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### Crew Lists 1837-1860

These records are held by the National Archives in London. Crew Lists are sorted by the port of registry. You can find out more about these records on the [National Archives' research guide](#).

### Crew Lists 1861-1994

These records are also held by the National Archives in London. Only a sample of the records have been retained. However a full complement is retained for 1939-1950. Most of these records are only indexed by the official number of the ship. Some of the records are held by other archives. You can find out more about these records on the [National Archives' research guide](#).

### Crew Lists 1867-1914

Some crew lists of Scottish ships are held by the National Records of Scotland. These are searchable by ship name on the NRS's [online catalogue](#) under the reference BT3. These are mainly for fishing and whaling vessels.